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ABSTRACT

Current economic, industrial, occupational, and social changes in the U.S. are having substantial impact on the academic and career and technical education programs in our public schools. As a result, students and their parents, need assistance in navigating the school system and accessing information so they can make informed decisions about school courses and programs that meet students' individual needs. A significant key to addressing such issues is the implementation of a comprehensive guidance program that serves all students. It is imperative that education leaders and policy makers identify and establish both clear goals and a common language for guidance programs that are designed to help students and their parents effectively deal with these changes as they relate to students' education and preparation for the future. The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) Guidance Task Force has developed this paper to examine new thinking on the role of the guidance profession in a shifting education system and how the guidance profession has an continues to change to meet the needs and expectations of students in the 21st century. (GCP)

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The Role of the Guidance Profession in a Shifting Education System

Premise

In this first decade of the 21st Century, the United States is undergoing rapid and complex changes economically, industrially, occupationally, and socially. These changes are having substantial impact on the academic and career and technical education programs in our public schools. As a result, students and their parents, now more than at any other time in our nation's history, need assistance in navigating the school system and accessing information so they can make informed decisions about school courses and programs that meet students' individual needs. A significant key to addressing such issues is the implementation of a comprehensive guidance program that serves all students. It is imperative that education leaders and policy makers identify and establish both clear goals and a common language for guidance programs that are designed to help students and their parents effectively deal with these changes as they relate to students' education and preparation for the future.

Guidance and School Improvement

Efforts to reform and improve education that began in the last century continue today. For school guidance and counseling, the educational reform and improvement process has resulted in a reconceptualization of guidance and counseling from a position/services orientation for some students to a comprehensive program, a program that is an integral part of the overall education system, serving all students and their parents. This reconceptualization and implementation of comprehensive guidance programs began in some areas of the country as early as the mid-1980s. Current research strongly supports the effectiveness of a comprehensive, programmatic approach to guidance for all students and the impact more fully implemented guidance programs have on student achievement. ACTE supports this reconceptualization of guidance as an integral part of education reform and school improvement starting with ACTE's use of comprehensive guidance program conceptualization and terminology when referring to school guidance and counseling.

Program Content

Comprehensive guidance programs consist of subject matter and related techniques and methods organized for the academic, career, and personal/social development of individual students. Comprehensive guidance program content is designed to assist students and their parents in making informed educational choices which lead to more educational and career options. Comprehensive guidance programs particularly emphasize concepts of academic and career awareness, exploration, and planning; education and career decision making skills; and, knowledge and understanding of local, state, and national educational, occupational, and labor market opportunities, needs, and trends. The focus on career development within the structure of comprehensive guidance program reflects a renewed emphasis the guidance field is giving to career interventions

and career development in the schools (Dykeman, Ingram, Wood, Charles, Chen, & Herr, undated).

Program Delivery Systems

The framework of a comprehensive guidance program is designed to assist all students in academic, career, and personal/social development. Professional school guidance counselors, working within a comprehensive guidance program framework utilize techniques and methods of guidance program delivery in the areas of individual student planning, guidance curriculum, and responsive services. They assist each student by working closely with the student and their parents or guardians to develop and use an individual educational and occupational plan. They deliver guidance curriculum to all students based on program content areas. They also make available responsive services for students with critical needs including individual and small group counseling, consultation, and referral. In addition, professional guidance counselors contribute to the creation of learning environments in schools in which every student can complete a challenging academic core and an academic and career and technical education concentration (Bottoms & Feagin, 2003). When federal law uses this updated comprehensive guidance program terminology, it will focus the attention of all professional school guidance counselors on the learning and career development concerns of all students as a part of their overall development.

Impact on Student Learning

What impact do comprehensive guidance programs have on students? Empirical research conducted during the past ten years has demonstrated that when professional school guidance counselors have the time, the resources, and the structure of a comprehensive guidance program in which to work, they contribute to positive student academic and career development as well as the development of positive and safe learning climates in schools (Dunham & Frome, 2003; Lapan, Gysbers, & Petroski, 2001; Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997). Research has also concluded that schools with more fully implemented comprehensive guidance programs have a significant impact student achievement. Students in high implementation schools rated their overall educational preparation as more adequate; rated their job preparation as better; took more advanced mathematics and science courses; took more career and technical education courses; had higher ACT scores in every area of the test; and, rated guidance and career planning services in their schools higher. (Nelson & Gardner, 1998).

ACTE's Position

ACTE endorses the reconceptualization of guidance and counseling from a position/services orientation to a comprehensive program that is an integral part of the overall education system, serving all students and their parents or guardians. ACTE also endorses comprehensive guidance program terminology and supports the work of local school districts and their professional school guidance counselors to develop, implement, and evaluate systematic and unified programs of guidance activities and services that serve all students and their parents or guardians. ACTE recognizes and supports comprehensive guidance program models for implementation that have been developed by state departments of education, local school districts, and guidance-related

professional associations. ACTE believes comprehensive guidance programs should be implemented in all secondary schools across the country. To accomplish this goal ACTE recognizes the importance and need for leadership (national, state, and local), policy, and resources to bring this goal to reality.

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The ACTE Guidance Task Force has developed this paper to examine new thinking on the role of the guidance profession in a shifting education system and how the guidance profession has and continues to change to meet the needs and expectations of students in the 21st Century. The task force membership included leaders from ACTE, the American School Counselor Association, National Career Development Association, State Directors for Career and Technical Education, secondary guidance practitioners, and guidance educators.

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